



## The Marriott Resort and Champions honors outstanding Aruban athlete Micky van der Vaart.

At the tender age of only seventeen, Mickey van der Vaart of Aruba is making a splash at international swimming competitions, and has already qualified to represent Aruba in the Summer Olympics of 2008 in Beijing. The Marriott Resort in conjunction with Champions Restaurant have decided to honor the young man for the honor he has brought to his homeland by bringing home the remarkable number of seventeen medals in various competitions around the Caribbean and Latin America.

The "Wall of Fame" found at the Champions Sport Bar pays homage to a number of Aruba's great athletes, and some joined the festivities on Saturday evening as Micky's autographed picture was added to the collection of photos and memorabilia that adorn wall. Micky's picture will share the wall with athletes of world fame such as Pelé, Muhammad Ali and Michael Jordan, but he also joins the honored ranks of Rocky Angela, noted baseball player, soccer great Elias Kock, and Triathlon winner Gert van Vliet, some of Aruba's most accomplished athletes, who were there to congratulate him on his special day.

Aruba's promising future Olympian was born in Holland, but his family moved to Aruba when he was only one year old. His first love was gymnastics, but at the late age of eleven, he decided to follow his brother's example and give swimming a try. Though he came late in age to the sport, it would appear that he had a natural talent, which his coach at the time, swimming great Roly Bislick recognized. Mickey confesses to finding swimming boring at first, but the encouragement of his coach and his first taste of real competition in Curaçao changed that completely, and his swimming career took off. To date, he has brought home seventeen medals for Aruba from international meets, and has broken many swimming records of the island. This year he has received many honors, including being chosen as the Outstanding Athlete of 2005 by Simplemente Deportivo, and also being awarded the Filipe Tromp Cup for Outstanding Youth for the second year in a row during the annual Queen's Day celebration.

Micky's strength is in long distance swimming, winning him medals in the 200, 400, 800, and 1500 meter events. Nicole Hoevertsz, a member of the International Olympic Committee and Secretary General of the Aruba Swimming Association was also on hand Saturday to recount his many achievements to the gathering, as was his present coach, Ishmael Santiesteban. Nicole spoke of the importance of encouraging athletic achievement sport in Aruba's next generation, and the role models that young men such as Micky present to the island's youth. Mickey's parents, Shur and Ludy were appropriately proud of their accomplished son.

Mickey autographed his photo with a flourish while being assisted by Champions' Manager Michael Richardson. He then officially presented it to Marriott GM Rick Zeolla and the Marriott Ocean Club Manager Flor van Der Vaart, who just happens to be his uncle, and was doubly proud that day, as the picture will reside in his resort. Congratulations Mickey for your many accomplishments!